

PRIORITY

(Security Classification)

## FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM : AMEMBASSY, MEXICO, D. F.

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

July 30, 1953

REF : Voluntary

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SUBJECT: Mexico City Press Hails Decision of U. S. Shrimp  
Fishermen Not to Fish Within 9 Miles of Mexico's Coast

During the week ending July 25, 1953 the Mexico City press carried conspicuous front-page articles and editorials praising the decision adopted at the III Annual Convention of the Shrimp Association of the Americas not to fish within nine miles of the Mexican coast, and speculating that this decision may be followed by formal recognition of Mexico's claim to nine miles.

Headlined "Possibility that Mexico's territorial waters may be fixed at 16 kilometers" an article in Excelsior of July 24 stated "... Washington at present is studying the bases for a Mexican-North American treaty whereby the owners of fishing vessels formally will agree not to fish within ten [sic] miles... In exchange for this, United States shrimp fishermen have asked that Mexico establish two refuge zones near Tampico and Campeche where fishermen might seek shelter from storms without exposing themselves to detention by Mexican gunboats..."

Excelsior attributed the above statements to Manuel SANCHEZ, President of the "International Commission" of the Shrimp Association of the Americas and Vice-President of the Brownsville Shrimp Exchange (a private company).

Inquiries made in fishing circles indicated that American members of the Shrimp Association, three or four weeks ago, sent to the United States Department of State a memorandum setting forth the need for respecting Mexico's nine-mile limit and requesting that a formal agreement to that effect be entered into with the Mexican Government.

The Embassy has been unsuccessful in its efforts to secure a copy of the memorandum in question.

JLMartinez:mra:EU  
REPORTER

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According to the local press, the III Convention of the Shrimp Association of the Americas was attended by 37 American and 19 Mexican representatives of fishing industries. Among members of the Association are the Texas Shrimp Association, the Florida Fishermen's Association, Chamber of the Mexican Fishing Industry, and a number of associate members from the state of Louisiana.

Relevant to the developments recounted above, was an item in Mexico City's El Universal of July 24, 1953 which disclosed that certain Mexican fishermen have been conniving with American-owned vessels to contravene Mexican fishing laws. The Mexican fishermen, according to the item in question, sold their shrimp catch to the American vessels, which paid them in United States dollars. To justify their returning to port with holds empty, the fishermen fabricated stories to the effect that they had been chased away from fishing grounds and attacked by American "pirates".

The Mexican Navy commissioned its personnel at Gulf ports, including Tampico, Veracruz, Campeche, and Ciudad del Carmen to investigate denunciations of the above nature and verified that the Mexican fishermen put to sea properly equipped with food for several days, ice for keeping the catch, and fishing permit; and that they invariably returned to port with holds empty and the same story of piracy. Although the Mexican Navy rushed coast patrol planes to persecute the offenders, none was ever sighted, and this prompted the Navy to investigate further.

Vessels found in Mexican territorial waters do not infringe Mexican fishing laws unless they are found with nets in water. By selling their catches to such vessels, the article ran, Mexican fishermen not only connived with the vessels to contravene Mexican fishing laws but also enabled them to evade fishing taxes.

For the Ambassador

  
Paul G. Minnerman  
Counselor for Agricultural Affairs

cc-FAS

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